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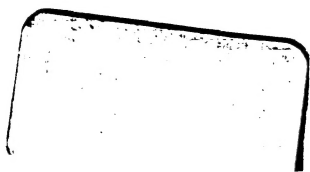
**THEOSOPHICAL  
MANUALS**

**III**

**KARMA**

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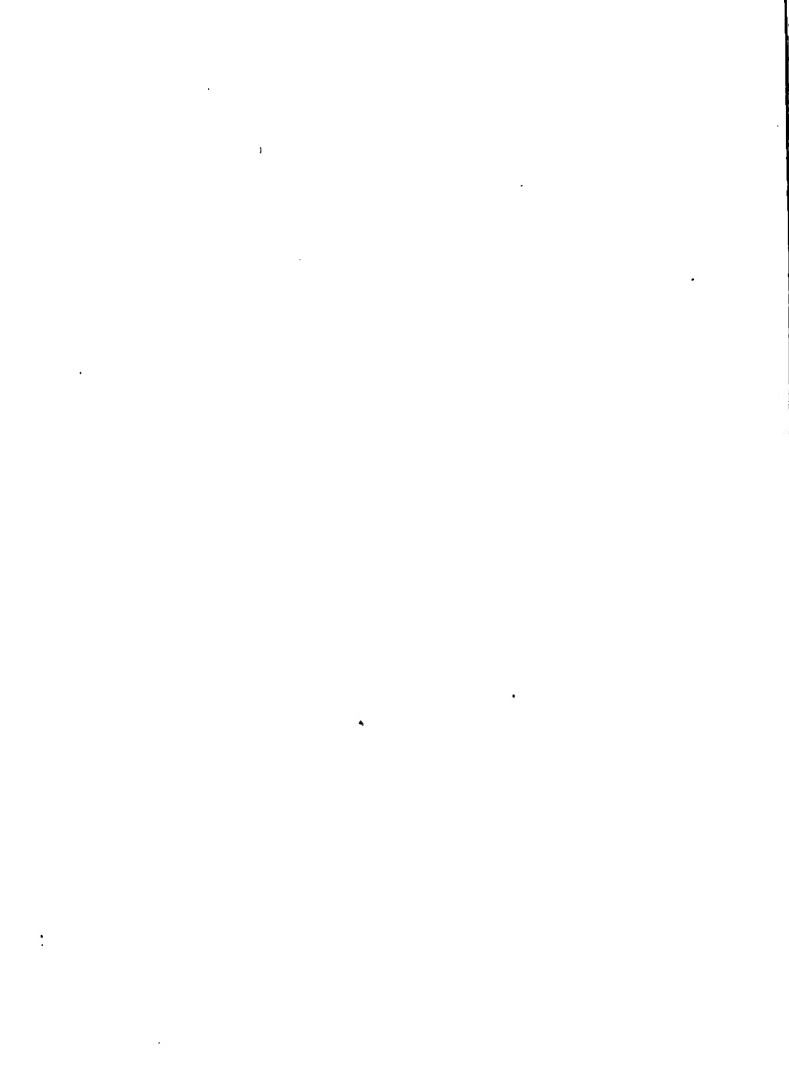












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# THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS

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KARMA

BY

A STUDENT

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1907

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## PREFACE

**T**HE remarks under this head are intended to be introductory to each of the Manuals.

First, as to the spirit in which they are offered. These manuals are not written in a controversial spirit, nor as an addition to the stock of theories awaiting public approval. The writers have no time to waste in arguing with people who do not wish to be convinced, or who ridicule everything which is new to their limited outlook. Their message is for those who desire to know — those who are seeking for something that will solve their doubts and remove their difficulties. For such, all that is needed is a clear exposition of the Theosophical teachings; for they will judge of the truth of a teaching by its power to answer the questions they ask. People realize, much more now than in the early days of the Theosophical Society, the value of Theosophy;

for the ever-increasing difficulties engendered by selfishness and materialism, by doubt and the multiplicity of theories, have created an urgent demand which it alone can satisfy.

Again, it is necessary to state clearly and emphatically the genuine teachings of Theosophy, as given by the Founder of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky, and her successors, William Q. Judge and Katherine Tingley. For, as H. P. Blavatsky predicted, there are persons who have sought to pervert these teachings and turn them into a source of profit to themselves and their own selfish and ambitious schemes. The true teachings do not lend themselves to such purposes; their ideals are of the purest and most unselfish. Hence these persons have sought to promulgate under the name of Theosophy a perverted form of the teachings, from which Brotherliness and other pure motives are omitted, and which contains doctrines which H. P. Blavatsky showed to be maleficent and destructive. As these pseudo-Theosophists have gained a certain amount of notoriety by using the names of the Theosophical Society and its Leaders, it is necessary to warn the public against them

and their misrepresentations. Their teachings can easily be shown, by comparison, to be directly contrary to those of H. P. Blavatsky, whom they nevertheless profess to follow. Instead of having for their basis self-sacrifice, self-purification and the elevation of the human race, these teachings too often pander to ambition, vanity and curiosity. In many cases they are altogether ridiculous, and only calculated to make people laugh. Nevertheless, as these travesties have served to discredit the name of Theosophy and to keep earnest inquirers away from the truth, it is well that the public should know their nature and origin. They are the work of people who were at one time members of the Theosophical Society, but who did not find in it that food for their own personalities of which they were really in search. So they turned against their teachers in wounded pride and vanity, and started little societies of their own — with themselves at the head.

The writers of these Manuals have no personal grievance against any such calumniators. Inspired by a profound love of the sublime teachings of Theosophy, they have made it

their life-work to bring the benefits which they have thereby received within the reach of as many people as possible. And they feel that they will have the hearty sympathy and co-operation of the public in exposing folly and bringing the truth to light.

Theosophy strikes unfamiliar ground in modern civilization, because it does not come under any particular one of the familiar headings of Religion, Science, Philosophy, etc., into which our age has divided its speculative activities. It dates back to a period in the history of mankind when such distinctions did not exist, but there was one Gnosis or Knowledge embracing all. Religion and Science, as we have them today, are but imperfect growths springing from the remnants of that great ancient system, the Wisdom-Religion, which included all that we now know as religion and science, and much more. Hence Theosophy will not appeal to the same motives as religion and science. It will not offer any cheap and easy salvation or put a premium upon mental inactivity and spiritual selfishness. Neither can it accomodate itself to the rules laid down by various schools of modern thought as to

what constitutes proof and what does not. But it can and does appeal to the Reason. The truth of doctrines such as Theosophy maintains, can only be estimated by their ability to solve problems and by their harmony with other truths which we know to be true. But in addition to this we have the testimony of the ages, which has been too long neglected by modern scholarship, but which is now being revealed by archaeologists and scholars, as H. P. Blavatsky prophesied that it would in this century.

It may perhaps be as well also to remind those who would criticise, that the state of modern opinion is scarcely such as to warrant anybody in assuming the attitude of a judge. It would be quite proper for a Theosophist, instead of answering questions or attempting to give proofs, to demand that his questioners should first state their own case, and to be himself the questioner. The result would certainly show that Theosophy, to say the very least, stands on an equal footing with any other view, since there is no certain knowledge, no satisfying explanation, to be found anywhere.



Since the days when the wave of materialism swept over the world, obliterating the traces of the ancient Wisdom-Religion and replacing it by theological dogmatism our religions have had nothing to offer us in the way of a philosophical explanation of the laws of Being as revealed in Man and in Nature. Instead we have only had bare statements and dogmatic assertions. The higher nature of man is represented by such vague words as Spirit and Soul, which have little or no meaning for the majority. The laws of the universe are briefly summed up under the term "God," and all further consideration of them shut off. Then came a reaction against the dogmatism of religion, and man pinned his faith to knowledge gained by study and reflection, limiting his researches however to the outer world as presented by the senses, and fearing to trench upon the ground which dogmatic theology had rendered the field of so much contention. The result of this has been that neither in religions nor sciences, have we any teaching about the higher nature of man or the deeper mysteries of the universe. This is a field which is left entirely

unexplored, or is at best the subject of tentative and unguided conjectures.

Until, therefore, religious teachers have something definite, consistent, and satisfactory to offer; and until science can give us something better than mere confessions of nescience or impudent denials with regard to everything beyond its own domain; Theosophy can afford to assume the rôle of questioner rather than that of questioned, and does not *owe* anybody any explanations whatever. It is sufficient to state its tenets and let them vindicate themselves by their greater reasonableness; and any further explanation that may be offered is offered rather from goodwill than from any obligation.

Theosophy undertakes to explain that which other systems leave unexplained, and is, on its own special ground, without a competitor. It can issue a challenge to theology, science, and other modern systems, to surpass it in giving a rational explanation of the facts of life.

Again, there are some questions which it is beyond the reach of the human mind, in *its present stage of development*, to answer;

and it would scarcely be just to arraign Theosophy for not answering these.

Judgment should in all cases be preceded by careful study. There are always those who will impatiently rush to questions which a further study would have rendered unnecessary; and it is safe to say that the majority of "objections" raised to Theosophical teachings are such as could have been solved by the objector himself, had he been a genuine student. In the ordinary courses of education, scholars are required and are content, to accept provisionally many of the teacher's statements, in full confidence that further study will explain what in the beginning cannot be made clear. In the same spirit an earnest student of Theosophy will be wise enough to hold many of his difficulties in reserve, until, by further investigation, he has gained better acquaintance with his subject. In the case of those who are not willing to adopt these wise and patient methods of study, it may be reasonably questioned whether they are the more anxious to learn or to disprove.

Above all it is sought to make these Man-

uals such that they shall appeal to the heart and not *merely* to the head; that they shall be of practical service to the reader in the problems of his daily life, and not mere intellectual exercises. For there have been in past days books written by persons more distinguished for a certain grade of mental nimbleness than for heartfelt devotion to the cause of truth; and these have appealed only to those people who love intricate philosophical problems better than practical work. But, as H. P. Blavatsky so frequently urged, the message of Theosophy is for suffering humanity; and the great Teachers, whose sole purpose is to bring to mankind the Light of Truth and the saving grace of real Brotherhood can have no interest in catering for the mental curiosity of merely a few well-to-do individuals. Even soulless men, said H. P. Blavatsky, can be brilliantly intellectual; but for those who are in earnest in their desire to reach the higher life intellectual fireworks alone will have little attraction. We intend, therefore, to keep the practical aspect of the teachings always to the front, and to show, as far as possible, that they are what

they claim to be — the gospel of a new hope and salvation for humanity.

These Manuals are not all the product of a single pen, but are written by a number of different Students at the International Headquarters of the UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY at Point Loma, California. These writers have contributed each one his own quota to the series.

For further explanations on Theosophy generally the reader is referred to other Manuals, dealing with Theosophy or the various Theosophical teachings.

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## WHAT WE MEAN BY THE "DOCTRINE OF KARMA."

**W**HEN Theosophists speak of the doctrine of Karma, they usually mean the doctrine that as we have sown, so shall we reap; and what we reap, that have we also sown. In other words, our fate and fortune are the consequences of our own acts and we incur reward or penalty according to our exact merits. There is no arbitrary interference of a divine dispensation, nor is anything left to mere "chance." This doctrine is not comprehensible without the accompanying doctrine of Reincarnation, because many of the experiences which we meet with are the result of things we did in past lives, and many of the things we do now will not yield their effects until a future life. When we speak of a person's "Karma," and say (for instance) that his Karma is good or bad, we mean — not exactly his luck and not exactly his merit — but something between the two.



Thus the doctrine of Karma is simply a more fully stated form of the scientific doctrine of the "Conservation of Energy," a doctrine which, as scientific men tell us, holds that there is an exact relation between cause and effect in the workings of Nature. But the doctrine of Karma extends this principle to the realm of moral, mental and spiritual forces, and in fact to the whole of life, making it a universal Law.

It may seem almost a truism when stated clearly; yet most people fail to recognize the Law, and the chief reason is that they are prevented by their religious and scientific ideas from perceiving its truth. We cannot understand Karma unless we admit the Soul's eternal existence throughout a long succession of earth-lives; for a single earth-life is but a minute fragment of a man's life and not enough to "show the pattern." And since neither religion nor science teaches us anything about Reincarnation, but both represent man's life on earth as lasting less than a century, it is impossible to make the notion of absolute justice fit in with them.

## I

### RELIGION AND KARMA

**T**HE absence of the doctrine of Karma from ordinary religious teaching causes a grave discrepancy — the difficulty of reconciling our conviction of the justice of the Higher Law with the facts of life as we find them.

This difficulty is responsible for innumerable mental conflicts, for sermons and essays innumerable, for disputes, schisms, secessions, creations of new sects, and lapses into "infidelity." It is practically the whole of religious thought in a nutshell, for nearly all questions turn on this difficulty in some form or other. It is, in short, the conflict between our intuition (the Divine voice from within) and our intellect, and arises from the fact that the latter is not developed proportionately but is hampered by ignorance and strange fallacies.

There is no real conflict between intuition and intellect, between faith and reason; the conflict is between true faith and false reason. The justice of the Law ought to be not only felt in the heart but perceived by the mind; and it would be so if we only had a comprehensible science of human life such as Theosophy affords.

There is no need to enlarge upon the subject of the incompatibility between our conceptions of life and our conviction of divine justice; the topic is only too familiar. We all know that on the theory that man lives only one earth-life, the good go unrewarded and the wicked prosper; that people suffer experiences for which there seems neither rhyme nor reason; and that the Deity seems to be totally indifferent. Some have given up religion altogether and profess not to believe in the existence of Deity, and others have sought various ways of explaining the discrepancy; while still others dismiss it as far as possible from their minds. Some say that we cannot expect to understand "God's ways and purposes, but

that he knows what is best." Some try to prove that the good are rewarded interiorly in some way and the wicked are punished in their consciences. Some say that all inequalities will be adjusted in heaven. But at best these explanations are very inadequate, and what they achieve is to show the sublime power of faith against the obstacles of ignorance and superstition.

We have been told again and again that it is "presumptuous to reason about God's purposes and that our poor human intelligence cannot hope to understand them." Nevertheless knowledge and science have progressed, and we slowly recognize that the laws of Nature are but the voice of Deity, and that we need not be afraid of finding out anything we ought not to know, for Deity's wisdom is infinite, surpassing all human knowledge. Our progress in science has enabled us to understand Life better than we did before. In the same way we should surely endeavor to understand its laws in the moral world and to extend our knowledge as far as possible; and we

ought to realize that the more we find out, the more it will exalt our conception of Deity. True science has nothing impious or irreverent in it. Our intellects are god-given and we should use them for what they are meant for — for sounding the truth.

When we find that ordinary theories of human life are altogether at variance with the true religion of our Souls — with the Divine revelation from within — we ought to realize that there is something the matter with those theories. And when we find that the doctrine of Karma, and its twin-doctrine of Reincarnation, explain these discrepancies and reconcile the facts of Nature with our faith in Divine justice, we ought to treat that doctrine with respect, as worthy of consideration.

The idea that the inequalities of this life are adjusted in heaven is more consoling than logical. This is a point that has been discussed under the head of "Reincarnation," where it was pointed out that under such a theory our life on earth becomes meaningless, being an utterly insignificant episode in the midst

of an eternity of spiritual existence. We are sent here to learn lessons and snatched away before we have hardly begun, leaving behind many unfulfilled hopes, unachieved purposes, uncorrected mistakes, and future lessons. There is nothing more glaringly inconsistent than this notion of a single unique earth-life lost in an infinite ocean of Soul-life. Though it is consoling to read the incomparable words that tell us that "Thy sun shall no more go down," and "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," these words acquire a sublimer meaning when understood as the promise of spiritual liberation and of the blessed state of the perfected Man, than when taken as the description of a heaven to which the few elect shall go to be eternally recompensed for what they may have done during the few short years of earth-life.

The doctrine of Karma teaches that there is a perfect relation between cause and effect in the sphere of human acts and experiences, as in the sphere of natural science. In other words it teaches that perfect justice rules in

human affairs, and that experience is proportioned to merit. No man can possibly suffer or enjoy consequences which he has not merited by his own actions; and everything which we reap, that have we also sown. But the doctrine of Karma does more than merely assert this principle. It demonstrates how it is true. Our intuition and sense of the fitness of things tells us that the Power which rules must be just. The alternative is to suppose that that Power is capricious; a supposition which is equally untenable whether we conceive of that Power as Deity or as any "scientific" equivalent for Deity. Theologians and scientists agree in attributing to their respective deities perfect justice and impartiality, the contrary hypothesis being untenable as affording no basis for philosophy. Thus, whether ruled by "God," or by some equally mysterious and all-powerful agency called "chance" or "destiny," we are equally in the hands of Law, just, impartial, unerring.

But how to show the just workings of this omnipresent Law — that is the difficulty.

Difficult, however, only so long as we have an untrue theory of life; for the false must necessarily be out of key with the true.

The acceptance of the doctrine of Reincarnation is an essential condition for the understanding of Karma. For the period occupied by a single life-time is so short in comparison with the career of the Soul, which is the real Man, that it does not suffice for a tracing out of the sequence of cause and effect. Many of the experiences which we undergo in this life are the result of things we have done in our past lives, and many of the things we are doing now will not take effect until a future life. For, as a day is but a single link in the chain of our life from birth to death, so is that life itself but a link in the greater chain of the Soul's life.

The difficulty of reconciling our innate conviction that the universe is governed by just and impartial law, with the facts of life as they appear to our limited view, has been the great stumbling block of philosophy and religious speculation. Deeply religious natures



have been content to trust and rest in the faith that all will be made clear in a future life. But more thoughtful minds have sought a more satisfactory explanation. But, ingenious as some of these explanations are, the attempt is useless without Reincarnation; for it is simply not true that justice is done within the space of a single life. But the knowledge of the fact of Reincarnation makes all simple. The doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma complete and explain each other. On the one hand, the principle of causation demands that we shall live again on earth; for we create during one life causes which cannot be worked out in any other way except in another earth-life. A man dies full of unrealized longings for certain experiences peculiar to life on earth, and these intense desires will draw him back to the field of their fruition. He goes away with many things begun that must be finished, and many purposes planned but not carried out. His life is only the preface to a necessary sequel — one chapter out of many in the great story. On the other hand Reincarnation ex-

plains Karma. The two truths are mutually consistent; and further, they are consistent with the other teachings of Theosophy and the remaining facts of experience. Thus does the truth vindicate itself by its consistency and wholeness.

The notion that perfect justice rules the world is one from which we cannot escape. It may be called a primary axiom of philosophy. No philosophy can be made on the opposite hypothesis; for the statement that all is chaos and hap-hazard is nonsense. We may accept such a statement, if we like, but we cannot build a philosophy on it; for all reasoning proceeds on rules and all thought has definite laws. We cannot do a sum on the hypothesis that 2 and 2 make 4 or 5 or 100 fortuitously. Thus, whether we call the source of eternal Law, God, or Nature, or Eternal Justice, or the Conservation of Energy, we are equally compelled to postulate that it is *law* and not chaos.

Ever since, thirty years ago, H. P. Blavatsky asserted as one of the fundamental principles

of the Theosophical Society the existence of the spiritual powers of Man, there has been in our modern world a rapid tendency to get the Christian religion out of its old dogmatic grooves and back to the original lines of its Founder; to enlarge our conceptions both of God and of Man. We used to hear that the authority of churches and of authoritative interpretations of the scriptures were the last court of appeal, and that any science which contradicted these was wrong and pernicious. Now the cry is rather, "Let us study life and Nature in every possible way and endeavor to comprehend God's plan. No knowledge which science can give us can possibly transcend the limits of that knowledge which is man's right, nor can any study of Nature lead us away from its divine author." Formerly we used to hear that the promptings of our own inner consciousness were unreliable and even sinful; but now we tend rather to recognize them as among the many channels through which the Eternal reveals itself.

Let us then, in the spirit of this larger view

of religion, try to understand eternal justice better. It is the theological God, and the various narrow conceptions of Deity that have so confused our ideas as to the relation between Deity and Man, and given rise to the contrariety between science and faith. The idea of the Eternal has been belittled by attributing to it all kinds of human limitations and infirmities. As said by H. P. Blavatsky:

INQUIRER. Do you believe in God?

THEOSOPHIST. That depends upon what you mean by the term.

INQUIRER. I mean the God of the Christians, the Father of Jesus, and the Creator: the Biblical God of Moses, in short.

THEOSOPHIST. In such a God we do not believe. We reject the idea of a personal, or an extracosmic and anthropomorphic God, who is but the gigantic shadow of *man*, and not even of man at his best. The God of theology, we say — and prove it — is a bundle of contradictions and a logical impossibility.

INQUIRER. Then you are atheists?

THEOSOPHIST. Not that we know of, and not unless the epithet of "Atheist" is to be applied to all those who disbelieve in an anthropomorphic God. We believe in a Universal Divine Principle, the root of

ALL, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of Being. . . .

Our DEITY is neither in a paradise, nor in a particular tree, building or mountain; it is everywhere, in every atom of the visible as of the invisible Cosmos; in, over, and around every invisible atom and divisible molecule; for IT is the mysterious power of evolution and involution, the omnipresent, omnipotent, and even omniscient creative potentiality.—*Key to Theosophy*, chapter v.

It is clear that the God of the Universe can not be limited by those human attributes of personality, etc., which so limit man's knowledge and power. Such a conception of Deity is inconsistent with the notion of omnipotence. Yet there are those who, in their superficial reasoning, imagine that by depriving Deity of personality, we thereby *reduce* him. But there is no question of reducing the Deity to the level of those beings which have not yet developed personality; that would be mere savage nature-worship or fetish-worship. Deity is *beyond* and *above* personality.

## NOTE ON THE WORD "LAW."

ATTENTION is drawn to the fact that the word "law" is commonly used in two different senses, which are often confounded with each other. It may mean (1) an edict, command, or ordinance; (2) a principle, rule, or prevalent order of things. The former is the expression of some will which has to be obeyed; the latter is a formulation of known facts. Thus the law of Moses is not similar to the law of inverse squares, nor are the laws of harmony things which must be obeyed under penalty of legal proceedings. These distinctions may seem trivial when thus presented, but they are not so when slipshod methods of thought cause them to be forgotten, as is sometimes done by inexperienced reasoners, who, having clothed their thoughts in words, afterwards forget that some of the words have two meanings and pick them up again by the wrong end as it were. For instance, when we observe that two bodies always attract each other with a force varying directly as the product of their masses and inversely as the square of their distance apart, we call this fact the "law of gravitation"; but when we go and deliberately aver that this law of gravi-

tation (which we have just invented) is capable of actually pulling down an apple off a tree upon the head of a sub sessile philosopher, we are guilty of the above mentioned blunder; because the dry fact is that no general principle, however neatly put, can pull down anything, any more than the laws of thought can compel a man to think. The implication is that what pulled down that apple was some mysterious force whose workings are known as the law of gravitation; but to say that the law did the work is like saying that a man walks by the force of ambulation.

In the expression "Law of Karma," the word "law" would seem to be used in both senses, sometimes the one, sometimes the other; but we must not mix them up. We can use the word to mean an abstraction, a generalization, of our merit and demerit, or of our experiences; or we can use it to denote an actual dynamic force which acts upon us and brings about the experiences. For there are Beings who are the agents of Karma and Man himself is one of them. These Beings are mentioned in another part of this Manual.

## II

### SCIENCE AND KARMA

**M**ODERN science is proud of its generalizations. One of these is the Law of Conservation of Energy. The Law of Karma may be regarded as an extension, a very great extension, in fact a completion of this.

The Law, as enunciated by modern science, states that the sum-total of energy in a closed system remains constant throughout any changes of form that energy may undergo; and, more broadly, that the sum-total of energy in the universe is always the same. No energy can be lost. When it disappears in one form, it reappears in another. The quantity of mechanical energy used up in friction generates an equivalent of heat-energy. A given quantity of electricity will decompose a given quantity of copper-sulphate and yield a given quantity of copper. The quantity of copper



which will be obtained can be exactly calculated, and any incidental escape of energy can also be calculated and allowed for. It is known to chemists that compounds contain a varying amount of potential energy locked up in them; and that this energy, which is often enormous, is set free when the compounds are decomposed. In other cases energy is absorbed. Of late years this science of thermo-chemistry has been extended by the discovery of new facts which lead to the conviction that the atoms themselves are compounds of still smaller rudiments, and contain in their turn an enormous quantity of potential energy. It is by virtue of this energy that they are so stable; and it is by virtue of the same energy that they may become so potent if we can decompose them. Needless to say, it is radium that is chiefly referred to here.

Of course reasonable and sincere scientists are not disturbed at finding that their scheme of the conservation of energy is liable to extension at any moment. That is what one

naturally expects of a provisional hypothesis. Nevertheless prejudice often contends with reason and renders innovations, however true, unwelcome. Hence there are some who have not welcomed the vast vista which the phenomena of radium have opened out. We are here confronted with an apparently illimitable source of energy, and the only item which figures on the other side of our balance-sheet against this prodigal expenditure is the almost imperceptible wasting of a minute particle.

But this is a very small circumstance when we take into account all the things that science has omitted altogether from its calculations. What of mental energy and the power of a human will? Are not these also forces? If we are to take into account the dynamic value of a human thought, we must indeed measure it in terms whose magnitude and variability are altogether in a different scale from that of the grosser forces. And if we are not to take these things into our calculations, then our calculations are indeed limited and inadequate.

True science declares that not only the gross physical plane which we can see, and those subtler but still physical forces whose effects we can measure, but the whole universe of life, with all its forces, mental, psychic and spiritual, must come under exact law and be subject to the same eternal rule of cause and effect. Otherwise there is chaos, or the arbitrary will of an imperfect Deity.

There are not a few cases in which the workings of the law of Karma can be directly traced, even by our (at present) limited intelligence. We can understand, for instance, how early years spent in sensual excess will impair the organism and bring on paralysis in old age. No one nowadays would think of attributing the stroke to the will of an avenging deity; yet such was at one time the belief. True we may still admit that the punishment is by the "decree of Deity," since Deity represents eternal Law and Justice; but this admission does not prevent us from recognizing the part which our own folly has played in the affair. In brief, we recognize that the acts of

man call into play Divine Law ; that both God and man may be, in different senses, the cause of the punishment ; and that though we invoke God, we must at the same time put our own shoulder to the wheel.

In addition to the effects whose cause we can trace, there are effects whose cause we cannot (in the present state of our knowledge) yet trace. But is there any sound reason for placing these effects in a different category? Does not logic declare that they also are due to the operation of eternal justice? Take the case of a man born lame. We cannot trace the connexion between his affliction and his (*presumptive*) fault. We do not know of Reincarnation, so our speculations are shut off effectually. But if we could see that man's past, in his preceding lives, we should probably be able to recognize the cause of his affliction, its justice and its needfulness for the Soul's experience.

In the case of a bodily disease, such as that just cited, we can often trace out the chain of causation, because it inheres in the visible body

which our science can study. Yet even here we fail, because sometimes the beginnings of the chain were in a past life. People are born with hereditary predispositions to disease; and, though we can trace the cause so far as heredity is concerned, we do not discern the moral connexion or perceive how the man's affliction depends on his own past acts. We do not know of Reincarnation, and so our investigations are brought to a final stop.

In the case of other kinds of fate, such as sudden financial ruin, accident, or untimely death, it is harder to trace a connexion, because we have no science which has investigated the phenomena of those inner planes where the invisible forces act. We still have to take refuge in the phrase, "visitation of Providence," or, what amounts to the same thing, "chance." Luck and fate are counters which denote the gaps in our knowledge, like the  $X$  in an equation.

But it will be easy to understand why we fail to discern the *rationale* of fate and fortune, if we reflect what tremendous gaps there

are in our knowledge. What do we know of thought? We can trace a few of its effects when they operate through our own bodily mechanism and produce visible action, or when they act on our nervous system and produce physiological changes. But thought has a power which acts outside of the body. A thought is a most powerful center of force, and once created it passes away from us and continues to exist, in company with countless other thoughts, in a kind of "space" which is entirely different from the so-called "three-dimensional" space of our sense perceptions. This thought-world is however an objective reality; and we all live in it, breathe it and stumble blindly about in it with our undeveloped inner senses. What about the dynamics of this thought-world? Ay, there is the gap in our knowledge. We are, to use a metaphor of H. P. Blavatsky's, spinning webs of destiny around us like a spider spins his web. We are each hour, each minute, accumulating stores of energy in the thought-world, which, by a law as exact and reasonable as that of

physical elasticity, will sooner or later react on ourselves.

Let us consider how a so-called "fortuitous" event takes place. What is chance, anyhow? If I toss a coin, what determines whether it will turn up heads or tails? Obviously there must be a chain of mechanical causes—the movements of the muscles and nerves, etc. And behind that must be mental causes, since the mind moves the body. If it is not my conscious intelligence that directs the issue, then it must be some unconscious element in my mind or nervous system. We cannot pause to follow out this thought further, but it leads to the mysteries of the lost science of divination. Our fate is perhaps determined by the "chance" direction we take on the streets or the "casual" meeting of an acquaintance. But what determines which road we shall go? A mental caprice. And what determined that mental caprice? All is law; there is a chain, though we may not see it; chance is a word that means nothing.

Sometimes we get up in the morning and

everything goes wrong. It is because of our mental state. Normally our safety is secured by a thousand little unconscious and half-conscious acts and instincts. But, if our senses are dulled and our nerves jangled, our instincts fail us, our reflexes get tangled, and we bump our head and upset our lamp. Or, again, we may have created such an unpleasant atmosphere around us by our thoughts that other people feel it and shun us or instinctively assail us. Here the effect can be traced to the cause. On the larger scale it is the same. In short, life is full of causes of which we do not know the effects, and effects of which we do not know the causes. On such a basis will you presume to deny the doctrine of Karma? Better study a little first.

In short, Theosophy does not admit of such a thing as chance or accident. Nothing can happen without a cause; though the cause may be invisible.

It is further evident that there are several threads of Karma in the skein of human life. An event may have a physical cause and a



moral cause also. Therefore it is absurd to debate whether a thing is brought about by a moral cause or a physical cause, because it is usually brought about by both. We attribute diseases and calamities to physical causes, and other races have attributed them to the visitation of the Gods; but, clearly, whether caused by the Gods or not, they must have a physical cause also; and conversely, an epidemic, although brought about by carelessness in sanitation, may and must also be a moral retribution.

The place where our survey of life breaks down most seriously is at the beginning and the end of a life-time. None of our popular teachings tell us anything about birth and death. The subject here trenches upon that of Reincarnation, which is dealt with in another Manual; but it is necessary to say something about it here. Since a man reaps in one life the consequences of what he has sown in previous lives, it is clear that there must be some explanation as to how the influence is carried over from one incarnation to the other. If

any one feels inclined to shrink at the difficulty of the explanation, let him remember that ordinary life is full of similar difficulties which science does not attempt to explain, yet with which we are so familiar that we take them for granted. Why, then, balk at a difficulty which is no greater, merely because it is less familiar?

A good illustration for our present purpose is that of the plant and its seed. In that seed (or around it or somewhere in connexion with it) there must be stored up the germ of everything which the future plant will possess. But what can science tell us about this mystery? Will the microscope disclose the conditions which determine the future character of the plant? Wherein or how are those characteristics contained? We can only whisper, "Molecules," and speculate whether the mere collocation of imaginary particles in an ideal space has anything about it of a causal or determinative power. The fact is that the real seed is invisible, and the entire plant exists complete in all its parts in a finer kind of matter called

astral matter before it does so physically (*see* Manual on "The Seven Principles.")

And so with man, it is useless to try to trace a physical connexion between one incarnation and another. Since the Reincarnating Ego is the only part of man which survives the interval, the causes must inhere in that. These causes are in the germ state; they are latent, like the contents of the plant-seed.

### SKANDHAS.


FOR the purpose of explaining to some extent how the attributes of one earth-life are carried over to the next, it will be convenient to use a term employed in the Buddhistic philosophy — the term *Skandhas*. Skandhas may be defined as the "attributes" with which the essential Man is clothed, and which go to make up his character and personality. In the Buddhist teaching there are five of these Skandhas: *rûpa*, form or body, material qualities; *vedâna*, sensation; *sañña*, abstract ideas; *samkhâra*, tendencies of mind; *viññâna*, mental

powers. Of these we are formed; by them we are conscious of existence, and through them communicate with the world about us. —(*Key to Theosophy*, chap. viii.)

When the Ego enters Devachan, it takes with it only the finest aroma of the Skandhas, the cream of the experiences which it has acquired during life—only the most spiritual essence of those experiences. All the grosser part disappears, with or after the physical death. The bodily skandhas decay, later on the astral skandhas; and so with each set, the kâmic skandhas dying out in *Kâmaloka*. But, though these attributes of the personality disappear from the field of action, they do not utterly perish. They pass into the latent or germ state, thus to abide until the re-entry of the reincarnating Ego into earth-life, when they attach themselves to it and thus become the agents of recompense and retribution. In short the simile of the seed applies. Further elucidation of this point will be found in the Manuals on “Man After Death” and “*Kâmaloka* and Devachan.” It is sufficient for our

present purpose to point out that there is actually a concatenation of cause and effect bridging the grave and bringing about unerringly exact consequences on all planes, physical, psychic, mental, etc.

The mysteries of the process by which an Ego, about to reincarnate, selects, or is assigned by the agents of Law, the physical vehicle which he is to inhabit, are too deep for our present capacity. But let no dull mechanical conceptions of the "scientific" brain mar the contemplation of a subject so solemn and sacred. Not in the realm of "blind forces" moves the Ego, nor does the immortal Self of man obey molecular attraction and fortuity. In the realms whither our Souls pass after death, dwell Intelligences as far superior to those of mortal man as is their radiant vesture to his dull clay. Karma is no mere mechanical law of action and reaction; it uses minds and wills as its agents, minds and wills of all grades, from those of men who blindly obey its mandates, up to those of Great Souls who willingly acquiesce in its sublime equity.



### III

## THE WORKING OF THE LAW

**B**UT, though we cannot reduce Karma to the level of a mere physico-mechanical process, neither can we on the other hand leave it an empty abstraction. There must be agents by which are performed the operations that unite cause to effect. And here it is necessary to call attention to a fallacy of modern science. This fallacy is that which postulates in the universe two kinds of force, intelligent or living, and unintelligent or dead. The former kind is supposed to rule in the animated kingdoms of Nature and the latter kind in the mineral kingdom. But according to logic and Theosophy there can be no such thing as a blind force, and even some scientists themselves have analysed the conceptions of modern physics and proved that such a thing is a logical absurdity. (See *Concepts of Modern*

*Physics*, by the late Judge Stallo, who analyses the meanings of the words "force," "matter," "atom," etc.)

Even the humblest actions of the particles of matter, the lowliest chemical reactions and the play of electrical phenomena are brought about by the action of Mind and Will of some sort; and, furthermore, this Mind and Will must belong to some Being or Beings. The trinity of Self, Mind and Will is the unresolvable unit of our intellectual conceptions; we must postulate them either directly or in veiled form, and beyond it we cannot analyse. Of course this does not deny that there are also mechanical agencies, but it merely states that such mechanical agencies are the secondary causes, minds being the primary causes. Just as our own body is a mechanism actuated by a mind, so is every other body in the universe. It will thus be seen that modern science has a vast gap to fill, in not accounting for the conscious element in Nature; and into this gap would probably fit many of those conceptions of which we read in ancient beliefs and which

recognized the existence of Nature-Spirits, Elementals, Gods, Devas, Gnomes, Genii, Nymphs, and so on. Degraded as these conceptions often are, into mere popular superstitions, they are nevertheless a survival of what was once a luminous and exact Science of Nature.

In short Theosophy postulates an innumerable host of Beings other than Man and the animals, existing on various planes of space invisible to the physical eye, and graduated from those which fulfil the lowliest functions up to those which preside over the destinies of planets. Such Beings are the agents of Karma — a fact which was surely recognized by antiquity and which is still believed in, though in superstitious manner, by the peasantry and some foreign peoples. For examples we might turn to an almost inexhaustible number of sources. Take Puck and the fairies, for instance; what are they but the agents for carrying out minor operations of adjustment in Nature? Mere fairy-tales and comedies now, perhaps; but not always so. So with the Fates



and Furies of classical mythology and with innumerable Gods in the Pantheons of Oriental religions.

Such beings are the agents of Karma, fulfilling upon Man the destinies which he invites and courts by his acts and thoughts. They act according to the laws of their being, and Man, by acting upon them, causes them to react upon him. As one of the Manuals of this series deals specially with Nature-Spirits, we will not discuss the subject further here, but merely give the following quotation from H. P. Blavatsky:

. . . the "four Mahârâjahs" or great Kings of the Dhyân-Chohans, the Devas who preside, each over one of the four cardinal points. They are the Regents or Angels who rule over the Cosmical Forces of North, South, East and West, Forces having each a distinct occult property. These BEINGS are also connected with Karma, as the latter needs physical and material agents to carry out her decrees, such as the four kinds of winds, for instance, professedly admitted by Science to have their respective evil and beneficent influences upon the health of Mankind and every living thing. . . . It is not the "Rector" or "Mahârâjah" who punishes or rewards, with or

without God's permission or order, but man himself — his deeds or Karma, attracting individually and collectively (as in the case of whole nations sometimes), every kind of evil and calamity. We produce CAUSES and these awaken the corresponding powers in the siderial world; which powers are magnetically and irresistibly attracted to — and react upon — those who produced these causes; whether such persons are practically the evil-doers, or simply Thinkers who brood mischief. Thought is matter, we are taught by modern Science; and "every particle of the existing matter must be a register of all that has happened."—*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, part I, stanza 5.

### INEQUALITIES IN KARMA, AND HOW ADJUSTED

It has been stated by the Teachers of Theosophy that no human incarnation is exactly adapted in every detail and degree to the merits or requirements of the Ego; — a statement which, at first sight, might seem to contradict the general statement of Karma. But Karma provides that justice shall be done in the long run. If perfect balance were maintained in every detail and every moment, there

would be nothing left to be adjusted. It is quite in accordance with the workings of Nature that there should be temporary deviations from harmony, to be subsequently restored. In the material world there is never perfect adjustment or completeness. It is a world of adjustments and compromises. In the Manual which deals with Devachan, it is pointed out that one of the results achieved by the Soul's sojourn in that state is the adjustment of inequalities of fate met with during life.

#### HOW MAN DISTURBS THE BALANCE OF NATURE

ONE way of explaining the Law of Karma is to state that man, by his actions, disturbs the harmony and balance of life; and that the life, in its effort to regain harmony, brings a reaction upon him. This is quite in accordance with scientific conceptions of the balance of forces. It would be stated somewhat as follows. The sum-total of energy within a closed system is always the same, and every displace-

ment within that system causes a displacement of equal and opposite effect in the other parts of the system. Every act of man rebounds like a stone that is thrown; and in the long run the man will prove to be his own target.

We can also say that an action is by its very nature as such, dual, consisting of an outgoing and a return, or of equal and opposite phases like a wave in physics; but that in our short-sighted philosophy, we discern only one half of the action. Many actions pass through their entire phase in a very short space of time, so that their duality is apparent; as in a quarrel, for instance, the twofold character of which is proverbial. If we put our finger into the fire and are burnt, the double character of the event is obvious; cause and effect are united. But very often there is between the two an interval of time so long that we fail to discern the connexion; and, when it is added that this interval may even include the gulf of death, the failure to trace the connexion becomes still more comprehensible.

## IV

### THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR MINDS

#### PERSONALITY. PERSONAL DEITY

**I**F we are to understand the ways of eternal justice we must be prepared to shake off the fetters of our minds; and when we consider the influences under which those minds have been developed, we shall scarcely fail to admit *a priori* that there must be many such fetters. Spinoza says that the reason why men live in such a state of puzzlement and discontent is that they regard everything from the standpoint of personal interest and allow their passions and imaginations to become mixed up with their perceptions and to give everything false color and perspective. It is therefore necessary, says he, to eliminate carefully such disturbing factors from our mind, as a scientific observer eliminates all sources of error

from his instruments. Now what are the chief preconceptions to which we are liable?

First let us consider some of the narrow ideas which we have unconsciously imbibed from centuries of dogmatic religious teachings. There is the notion of the personal God. This notion gives rise to the ideas of caprice, anger, favor and similar personal emotions assignable to a great personality. To this notion of a personal God who can be incensed or appeased, we have added as a natural corollary the idea of a subservient Man, "born in sin," unworthy and incompetent, dependent for all good upon divine favor. These ideas tinge the mind and cause it to take narrow and mean views. Take, for instance, the way in which we regard our fortune. We call it good or bad according as it pleases or displeases our feelings, according as it meets the approval or disapproval of our little wills and judgments. And we say that we are the "subjects of God's anger or pleasure" accordingly. In brief we take a view of reward and punishment which is not very wise and far-seeing. It cannot be

denied that religious teachings have favored this view, for do they not hold up continually before our eyes the picture of a Deity angered or appeased? Whenever great minds have taken a broader view, it has been in spite of dogmatic teaching and not infrequently in the teeth of persecution.

It is now time that we should free our minds from these elementary notions, by which the ideas of God and of human life are associated with fear and abjection, as in the case of savages. These notions arise from the lower nature of man, which is mean and narrow; they are not consistent with the dignity that should belong to a divinely inspired being such as man is.

It is the part of a suspicious and surly nature to quarrel with its lot and imagine that it is being punished when it is not. It is not dignified to cry out whenever anything happens that is not quite in accordance with our wishes, and to cringe before providence in a spirit of supplication. The general division of fortune into good and bad is made on very

narrow principles. Wealth is considered to be good fortune and poverty bad; but from a higher point of view this may or may not be true. Again, it is possible that bodily affliction may be a greater blessing than health in certain cases. The higher our point of view the more tolerant become our ideas of fate and fortune, until we arrive at the conclusion that everything which can happen to us may be for the good of the Soul.

But still more important is the attitude we take in regard to our responsibility. If we consider ourselves the victims of external powers, we having no control over our destiny, then it is no wonder if we fall into an attitude of supplication and often feel ourselves ill-used, or grow indifferent to life's duties. But, once let the idea prevail that we are masters of our destiny, and the whole attitude of mind changes. We can say with Faust:

Du, stolzes Herz, du hast es ja gewollt!

"'Tis thou, proud heart, 'tis thou hast willed it so!"

The so-called misfortunes which beset us are those which we have incurred by our own Will,



for the education of our character ; as one who is in training sets himself difficult tasks to accomplish. To quarrel with our fate is to be disloyal to our own Soul ; it is to become forgetful of our real destiny. Let us learn to look upon ourselves as knights braving the dangers in search of Truth, like those heroes of the sacred myths who slew dragons and overcame enchantresses in order to win the Princess. In short, let us revive the ideals of Chivalry, which taught manly dignity and womanly self-respect, and which have been largely supplanted by that debasing attitude of mind according to which we are " miserable sinners," whose duty is to go through this life in humble submission until we are released from it to go to selfish bliss. Chivalry upheld the true Freedom — the freedom of the human Soul — and taught men to regard all situations as opportunities, and all so-called misfortunes as chances for showing courage and for learning something. We have become sordid and commercial in our ideas, even of religion. There is too much petty calculation of chances and


weighing of profit and loss; we are too anxious about the fate of what we call our souls. There has been a tradition which associated piety with worldly prosperity and exalted selfish thrift into a cardinal virtue; and, however useful this may have been on occasion, it has been carried too far.

Hence the words "punishment" and "reward" acquire new meanings. The word punishment as implying a visitation of anger or revenge, should be banished from our dictionary. Retribution is but the natural outcome of mistaken acts, and it should be regarded as a just and merciful provision by which we are enabled to learn better. A man with an easy life may be a feeble character who has not yet merited more strengthening treatment; while a man who has a difficult life may be one who has earned the right to be taught.

One could of course dilate to any extent on such subjects; but the present purpose is to show the bearing of the doctrine of Karma on them. The doctrine of Karma simply brings our intellectual convictions into harmony with

our moral convictions; replacing those theological errors which have been such stumbling blocks. We *feel* that man is master of his own destiny; Karma enables us to *see* it.

Personality has acquired altogether too great a prominence in our civilization. It colors all our views. Personal salvation occupies too large a place, and we each aim at a personal and exclusive relationship with God. According to Zoroastrianism, personal attainment was considered, not as being for the benefit of the possessor, but as an addition to the sum-total of good of the world. And truly our personality is a little thing, compared with the greatness of the world — compared with the greatness of the true Self. Looking at humanity in its crowds, how can we imagine that its multitudinous petty personalities are all so important! Dependent on this exaggeration of the personality is an exaggerated attachment to earth-life and an exaggerated fear of death. We are not sufficiently conscious of our immortality. Nor are we sufficiently conscious of our solidarity. There are many social souls



whom the world does not deem very worthy, who may be much nearer the Light than many a pious and respected character, because they are not cankered with the blight of self-righteousness. As a learned divine sings:

Give me an heart that beats  
In all its pulses with the common heart  
Of human kind, which the same things make glad,  
The same make sorry! Give me grace enough  
Even in their first beginnings to detect  
The endeavors which the proud heart still is making  
To cut itself from off the common root,  
To set itself upon a private base,  
To have wherein to glory of its own,  
Beside the common glory of the kind!  
Each such attempt in all its hateful pride  
And meanness, give me to detect and loathe, —  
A man, and claiming fellowship with men!—*Trench*

And we are apt to carry this personal attitude of mind into our reflections on the subject of Karma. The question of our own personal merits and demerits looms too large before the eye. But, though perfect justice is done to each unit of humanity, it might be better if we were less anxious about our own

particular case. The comradeship with our fellows which is so necessary and so precious to us involves us in a system of give and take, as to the exact adjustments of which it is not the part of a generous nature to inquire too closely. We throw in our lot with others for better or worse, and get our fair share of the good and bad luck plus the inestimable advantage of comradeship. There have been times in the world's history when the personality was not so emphasized as it is with us; when people were more conscious of being part of the universe; when they felt so secure in their larger life that they fretted less about their smaller. But this is the age of individualism — say rather of personalism — even in religion, even in prayer, even in aspiration. Hence Karma will, one fears, appeal to many in the light of a personal solace, whereas one would rather offer it as a broad general doctrine affecting the lives of mankind in the mass.

The very inadequate idea of Godhead derived from narrow religious teachings also

hampers us in our conceptions of Karma. For, having endowed God with many of the limitations which go to make up a personality, including caprice, we are obliged to reduce our notions of eternal justice to a somewhat similar human standard. Hence enter the notions of favor and propitiation, which are more proper to savages worshiping a tribal fetish than to advanced people believing in eternal justice.

### NATIONAL AND RACIAL KARMA

WHAT has been said about the undue emphasis given to the personality in modern civilization is well illustrated by the teachings as to national or racial Karma. In the *Key to Theosophy*, by H. P. Blavatsky, we find the following:

INQUIRER.—But surely all these evils which seem to fall upon the masses somewhat indiscriminately are not actual merited and INDIVIDUAL Karma?

THEOSOPHIST.—No, they cannot be so strictly defined in their effects as to show that each individual

environment, and the particular conditions of life in which each person finds himself, are nothing more than the retributive Karma which the individual has generated in a previous life. We must not lose sight of the fact that every atom is subject to the general law governing the whole body to which it belongs, and here we come upon the wider track of the karmic law. Do you not perceive that the aggregate of individual Karma becomes that of the nation to which those individuals belong and, further, that the sum total of National Karma is that of the World? The evils that you speak of are not peculiar to the individual or even to the Nation; they are more or less universal; and it is upon this broad line of Human interdependence that the law of Karma finds its legitimate and equitable issue.

INQUIRER. Do I then understand that the law of Karma is not necessarily an individual law?

THEOSOPHIST.—That is just what I mean. It is impossible that Karma could readjust the balance of power in the world's life and progress unless it had a broad and general line of action. It is held as a truth among Theosophists that the interdependence of Humanity is the cause of what is called Distributive Karma, and it is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief. It is an occult law, moreover,

that no man can rise superior to his individual failings without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way no one can sin, or suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality there is no such thing as "Separateness"; and the nearest approach to that selfish state which the laws of life permit is in the intent or motive.

Thus the laws of association forbid any one from living separately, and individual fate is interblended and interwoven with collective fate in a way that resembles that in which atoms are interrelated. We share both the good and the ill fortune of others with whom we are associated.



## V

### KARMA AND FREEWILL

#### FATALISM

**C**URIOUS conundrums are sometimes propounded on this question, owing to obscurity of reasoning; but they can be readily solved by maturer thought. For instance, people may argue, "Since all events are indissolubly joined to their previous causes, what is the use of making any effort?" This is the delusion of fatalism. It ignores the fact that owing to the Divine part of our nature, we have a center which stands outside of the Karmic chain and by which we are able to act independently and set new causes in motion. Besides this, there is a logical fallacy involved, as the following instance will show. Suppose a man should fall off a ladder, ought you to abstain from catching him upon the


ground that that would be interfering with the law of gravitation? Clearly you cannot interfere with the law of gravitation, which will go on acting, whatever you may do; and equally clearly you *can* help the man. In the same way it is your duty to do your duty and there is no fear that you will thereby interfere with the law of Karma. You yourself are an agent of Karma, and it may be a part of that man's Karma that he should be helped. It is in your power to be that helper or not. The doctrine of fatalism, in fact, means nothing, and cuts both ways. If it leaves us free to let things alone, it leaves us equally free to act. It is our duty to help others all we can, and if it is not their Karma to be helped, the Law will take care of that. Besides, as said before, the humane motive of a man is an extraneous power inasmuch as it proceeds from a higher source, and therefore it can add to the total of good in the universe.

## KARMA IN ANTIQUITY

NEMESIS was a conception of the ancient Greeks, which represents Karma in its retributive aspect. Their dramas depicted the consequences of rebellion against the moral law. The agents by which this retribution was brought about were called the "Furies," Eumenides or Erinnyes, female deities of grim aspect, with black and bloody garments and serpents instead of hair. They had a burning torch in one hand and a whip of scorpions in the other. It is noteworthy however that, after they had ceased to persecute Orestes, they became changed in character and were called the Eumenides, which means the "benevolent."

The Fates or Parcae represented another similar conception, being three sisters who determined all destiny and to whose decrees even Jupiter himself was held by many to be subject.

The Norns were the ministers of destiny in



the Scandinavian mythology. Of them it is said:

the Norns shall order all,  
And yet, without thy helping  
Shall no whit of their will befall.

For even the freest will is conditioned by obligations of some kind, however high those obligations may be; and the Norns represent the sum-total of destiny.

In Buddhism the teaching is most pronounced. In *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold, we read:

KARMA — all that total of a soul  
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,  
The "self" it wove with woof of viewless time  
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts.

Before beginning and without an end,  
As space eternal and as surety sure,  
Is fixed a power divine which moves to good,  
Only its laws endure.

It will not be contemned of any one.  
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains;

The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,  
The hidden ill with pains.

It seeth everywhere and marketh all;  
Do right—it recompenseth! Do one wrong—  
The equal retribution must be made,  
Though Dharma\* tarry long.

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true  
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;  
Times are as naught, tomorrow it will judge,  
Or after many days.

By this the slayer's knife did stab himself;  
The unjust judge hath lost his own defender;  
The false tongue dooms its lie; the creeping thief  
And spoiler rob, to render.

Such is the law which moves to righteousness,  
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;  
The heart of it is love, the end of it  
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey!

The books say well, my brothers! Each man's life  
The outcome of his former living is;  
The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,  
The bygone right breeds bliss.

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\* The Law.

That which ye sow ye reap. See yonder fields!  
The sesamum was sesamum, the corn  
Was corn. The silence and the darkness knew;  
So is a man's fate born.

He cometh, reaper of the things he sowed,  
Sesamum, corn, so much cast in past birth;  
And so much weed and poison stuff, which mar  
Him and the aching earth.

If he shall labor rightly, rooting these,  
And planting wholesome seedlings where they grew,  
Fruitful and fair and clean the ground shall be,  
And rich the harvest due.

The Oriental word Kismet is a charm to  
reconcile one to one's justly incurred lot, but  
not an excuse for inaction as it is so often  
made to be.

Following are some quotations illustrating  
the convictions of various writers as to Karma.

We are our own children.—*Pythagoras*.

Nothing can work me damage but myself.—*St. Bernard*.

We make our fortunes and we call them fate.—*B. Disraeli*.

Men must reap the things they sow.  
Force from force must ever flow.—*Shelley*.

Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk with us still.—*Beau-  
mont and Fletcher*.

The soul contains in itself the event that shall  
presently befall it, for the event is only the actual-  
izing of its thoughts.—*Emerson*.

Not from birth does one become a slave; not from  
birth does one become a saint; but by conduct alone.  
—*Gautama the Buddha*.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are  
the issues of life.—*Solomon*.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatso-  
ever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he  
that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corrup-  
tion; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the  
Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary  
in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if  
we faint not.—*Paul*.

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what  
judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what  
measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.  
—*Jesus*.

## VI

### THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

#### THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF A FAITH IN THE MORAL LAW

**I**N conclusion we must emphasize the vital need, which there is at the present day, for a renewed faith in the Moral Law. Although religion ought to inculcate this faith, religion as we have it today no longer does so, nor does any other belief which we have. It will be useless to contest this accusation in face of the undeniable facts; if we are to judge our religion and our philosophies by their fruits, we must bring them in as defaulters.

The ideals of conduct upon which men act prove that they do not realize the existence of the Moral Law, or at any rate they do not realize it strongly enough to influence their conduct. They act as though in the belief that



it is possible to benefit oneself by courses which involve injustice to one's fellow man. Hence we have the reign of what is called "individualism" but were better called "personalism." In commerce this means that one man or one corporation strives after its own individual welfare, disregarding or wilfully sacrificing the interests of others. The result upon commerce as a whole is most disastrous; for whereas with all the inventions of modern science it ought to be possible for every one to live in comfort with very little labor, the average prosperity is very low and a large proportion of the population spend their days in toil. The wastage and friction of commerce, pursued on such wrong lines, is very great; but we scarcely realize it from want of anything better to contrast it with. The growth of disease and insanity, the problem of how to educate and manage our children, the problem of the poor, and all the other problems which agitate us today, are evidences of the lack of law and order in our life.

The "fear of God" is no longer effectual;

it is not real enough; and when it does produce an effect, this effect is not of the right kind. It conduces rather to the establishment of a private and personal relation with the Deity, with a view to personal salvation beyond the grave; whereas it should incite us to reliance on the dignity of our own Divine nature and to efforts to render *this* life a heaven.

In such expressions as Providence, the Moral Law, Divine Justice, God's Will, Nature, and the like, we recognize the Law of Karma; we recognize that, as eternal Life pervades Nature, so an eternal spiritual Life pervades the realms of consciousness, adjusting all needs and deserts. As the indestructible Life in Nature preserves the balance, destroying what is useless, recreating what is useful, and being in short a divine law of justice in the lower kingdoms; so the Moral Law adjusts things in the moral or spiritual world, destroying the evil and regenerating the good. We are conscious that a murderer offends against this Moral Law and that retribution will fall on

him sooner or later. The difference between ourselves and other races is that we, with our crude unphilosophical theology, speak of the direct personal intervention of God—the Power that formed the universe of stars; while the other religions have preferred to imagine the Supreme Deity as manifesting his justice and power through a host of celestial Beings. But the difference between Monotheism and Polytheism is largely one of names.

It is maintained that all modern civilization is indebted to the influence of Hebraic and Christian religion for its strong sense of the Moral Law. It is true that the Wisdom of the Past has descended to us largely through the medium of these two religions; but it may well be asked whether they have not cramped our conceptions of Eternal Justice. We shall find in Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, the Vedânta, and the other ancient religions, the same ideas of Eternal Justice and Moral Law, but uncramped by the idea of the personal Deity. This idea has introduced the notion of *fear*. We talk of the “fear of

God." When the absurd theological notions of Godhead cause us to reject our belief in God, we may — possibly — lapse into disbelief in the Moral Law. We need, therefore, a way of recognizing the Law without the theological conceptions.

We need a living sense of the Moral Law and of Eternal Justice, detached from narrow theological conceptions. When we reject the absurdities of some theological teachings, we need not reject the Moral Law too. When we cease to "fear God," we need not give ourselves over to license, as if there were no Law. What we need is a consciousness, a direct feeling or perception, of the Moral Law, strong enough to act as an incentive to justice and a deterrent from injustice, as real as the laws of health. No man needs a church or pulpit to tell him that it is wrong to soak himself in whiskey; he feels that he is defying the laws of health and they will be revenged upon him. It ought to be so with the Moral Law. When a man thinks of swindling you for his own immediate pecuniary gain,

he ought to feel that he is injuring *himself*; it ought to hurt him to do it. But he is ignorant and stupid; he is a fool. He has not the sense of solidarity. He has the impression that he possesses real private interests apart from the interests of his kind, which is a delusion. Experience demonstrates to us over and over again that it is a delusion, yet we are so enslaved by our impulses and so purblind to our real interests that we continue to blunder.

To develop in human society this consciousness of the *Moral Law as a fact in Nature*, independently of religious sanction, what is necessary? We must develop the sense of solidarity, the sense of the unity of life. "Separateness" is a delusion; men are united like the branches of one tree, and disunion means decay. When we do injustice we pollute the fount of our own life. This is a fact which daily experience teaches us, and it is to the shame of religion that instead of confirming and explaining it, it throws every difficulty in the way of our recognizing it.

For our Occidental religion as falsely understood fosters the idea of separate personality, separate souls and separate salvation, and makes Man a radically evil Being. It removes the Moral Law from its state of immanence in human nature and transfers it to the Deity.

Now what is meant by the "sense of solidarity"? Not a mere intellectual acceptance of the principle, for that can do no more good than sermons. We need to be conscious of some fact in our nature that corresponds to this principle; we need to be aware of our unity with each other. Such a consciousness comes gradually as a result of studying the Theosophical teachings as to the nature of man and constantly striving to live up to them. We come to regard the impulses of personal desire as extraneous forces, parasitic to the real life; and to look for the dawn of a deeper consciousness in which the sense of solidarity shall be more palpable. Thus we acquire such a strong sense of the existence of the Soul that we are conscious of a feeling of resistance whenever we are impelled to

act contrary to its Law. In short the *Conscience* awakes. One in whom this sense is aroused no longer feels alone and apart. He feels that he cannot act in secret; he shares in common with others an interior Life — the Soul-Life; and this is so sacred, so important to his happiness, that he feels he can not violate it. Therefore he will not act unjustly, though he knows he may escape detection in the ordinary sense. For he feels that the omnipresent eye of the Soul knows and that his comrades will, in their inner consciousness, also know. The sense of guilt, the sense that he has violated the unspoken oath of a sacred freemasonry and so cut himself off from the ties of fellowship, will restrain him effectually.

Would it not be a blessed thing if we could awaken such a conscience, such a prescience of fellowship, among humanity at large; so that each and all would feel themselves linked in a sacred freemasonry which they dared not violate; and so that this conscience rested, not on the fear of an avenging Deity, or

anxiety for one's salvation, or on a maudlin religious sentimentalism, but on an actual knowledge of one's Divinity and of the oneness of humanity in Soul and Heart? •

The establishment of a belief in Karma means all this and more. It means the revival of lost knowledge and the anchoring of morality upon a basis of experienced facts instead of leaving it dependent upon dogmatic or so-called "scientific" sanctions.





*There is no Religion Higher than Truth*

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and  
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*Established for the benefit of the people of the earth & all creatures*

---

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Its subsidiary purpose is to study ancient and modern religions, science, philosophy and art; to investigate the laws of nature and the divine powers in man.

\* \* \*

THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, founded by H. P. Blavatsky at New York, 1875, continued after her death under the leadership of the co-founder, William Q. Judge, and now under the leadership of their successor, Katherine Tingley, has its Headquarters at the International Theosophical Center, Point Loma, California.

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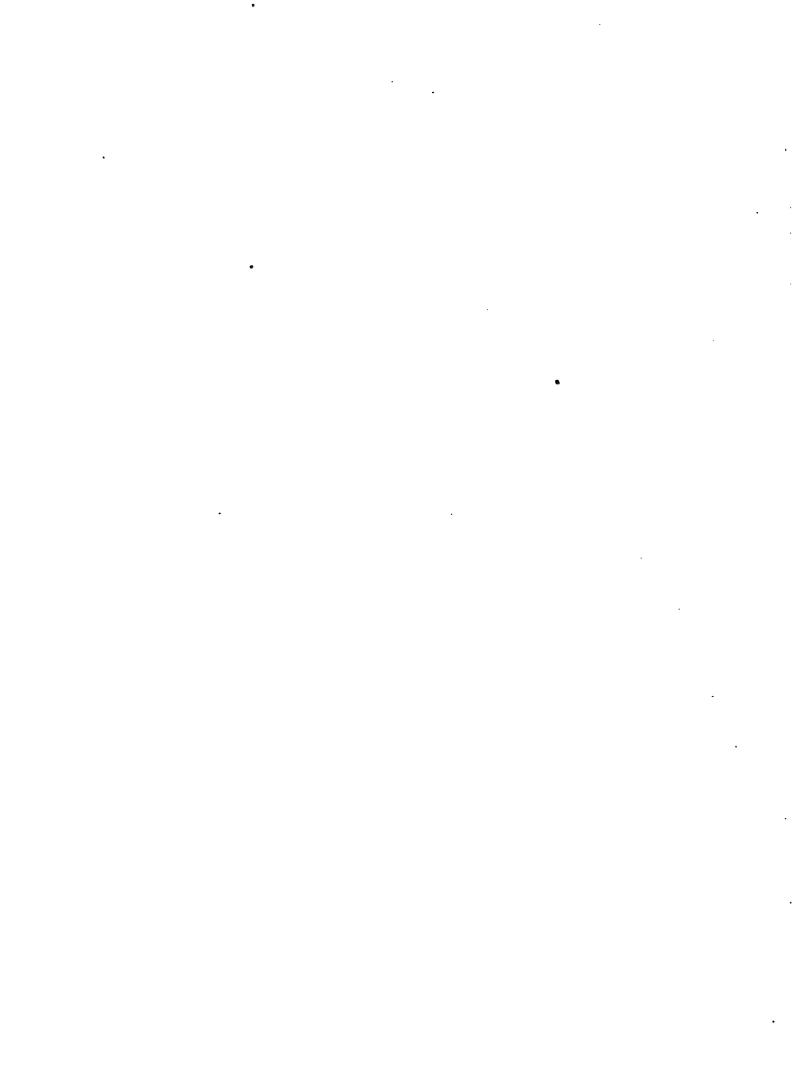
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